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## Viewing cable 09ATHENS318, GREECE TRIES TO COPE WITH HEIGHTENED DOMESTIC

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09ATHENS318**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09ATHENS318</a>	<a href="#">2009-03-16 05:35</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Athens</a>

Appears in these articles:

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VZCZCXRO0090  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHTH #0318/01 0750535  
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O 160535Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3369  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000318

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2019  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [ABLD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: GREECE TRIES TO COPE WITH HEIGHTENED DOMESTIC  
TERRORIST ACTIVITY

REF: A. ATHENS 282  
[1](#)B. ATHENS 248  
[1](#)C. ATHENS 215  
[1](#)D. ATHENS 114

Classified By: DCM Deborah McCarthy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary  
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¶1. (C) New terrorist attacks continue to rock Greece with a frequency not seen since 2000, unnerving the country's political and professional elite. A number of violent far-left groups -- some previously unknown -- have claimed responsibility for bombings, shootings, and arson incidents, and this and the unprecedentedly large scale of some of the attacks have raised concerns that the new generation of Greek domestic terrorists is more impulsive and less concerned about collateral damage than its predecessors. While no one has been killed in any of the attacks this year, there is real concern about a possible attack with mass casualties, a prospect that has many Greeks worrying about their own security in a way they have not for over a decade. End Summary.

#### More Attacks, More Claims of Responsibility

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¶2. (SBU) In January and February of this year there were over 70 security incidents (including IED and explosive attacks, as well as those involving small arms, grenades, and other infantry-style weaponry) in Greece, roughly equivalent to the number for each entire year in the 2001-2004 range. There were about 140 such incidents in 2005, 280 in 2006, 220 in 2007, and well over 300 in 2008, which included a huge spike in December during the riots that followed the shooting death of teenager at the hands of police. On March 12 the terrorist group Revolutionary Struggle claimed responsibility for two of the most notable recent incidents, the bombing of a Citibank branch in the Nea Ionia suburb of Athens March 10 and the attempted bombing of a Citibank branch in the Kifissia suburb of Athens February 18 (ref C). The Kifissia bomb, if it had been properly formulated and constructed, could have caused a much greater level of destruction than the gasoline-based bombs that have been used in other attacks. In its statement, Revolutionary Struggle did not explain this apparent escalation in its tactics, but launched broadsides against banks for their role in the global financial crisis, the media, and two-time former Minister and ruling party politician Savvas Tsitourides, and made references to the older Greek terrorist organizations November 17 and ELA, with particular emphasis on ELA.

¶3. (C) Nor are the attacks limited to the relatively well-established Revolutionary Struggle. A new group called Sect of Revolutionaries has issued militant declarations of responsibility for recent attacks on police and television stations (ref B). Multiple organizations have claimed responsibility for taking over and burning a commuter train in Kifissia March 3, although the anarchist group Gangs of Conscience - Perama Extremists appears most likely to be the responsible party (ref A). Other groups have gotten into the act as well with attacks on banks and other targets.

#### Nervousness among Police and Public

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¶4. (C) The police have increased their visible presence in downtown Athens anarchist hubs like Exarchia, where police engaged in a raucous battle with anarchist gangs on the night of March 6-7. Police reportedly employed a new, more aggressive approach to security incidents when a large force responded to a masked gang's attack on two downtown opticians' shops March 10, but they failed to make any arrests or to prevent the plundering of the shops. Indeed, police have made no arrests in connection with any of the serious terrorist attacks recently. The newspaper To Vima reported March 11 that police were bracing for more terrorist action and published a "top secret" list of 82 individuals and facilities that the police considered major terrorist targets. Later the same day police chief Tsiatouras placed four senior officers on administrative leave in connection with the leaking of the list.

¶5. (C) The expectation of further serious attacks is sinking in not only with the police and political class, but also with broader sections of the Greek public, as we have

observed anecdotally. The Ambassador recently attended an event organized by Greek alumni of Harvard and Georgetown -- mostly upper-middle-class professionals not involved in politics -- and found them genuinely concerned about their safety, to the extent that they refrained from publicizing their event out of fear that it might become a target. Antonis Peratikos and George Momferatos, leading members of the "Os Edo" organization of family members of November 17 victims, told the Ambassador and DCM March 12 that in the years following the 2002 arrests of November 17 members, Greek society grew relaxed about the terrorist threat. Now, they said, a successful attack on the scale of the attempted Kifissia fertilizer bomb could make November 17's murders look restrained in comparison. Because of the re-emergence of the threat, they indicated they were looking into ways to re-energize their organization and to remind the Greek public of the true human cost of terrorism.

16. (C) A large number of American businesses in Greece are very concerned about the safety of their personnel, operations, and buildings due to the increased activity by anarchist and terrorist groups. Citibank, Coca-Cola, Nike, IBM, American Express, and other Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) members have expressed their frustration regarding the inability of the police to make any significant arrests of RS members and their lack of faith in the Greek judicial system. An OSAC meeting is scheduled for March 31.

Comment

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17. (C) While anarchist violence has never really stopped in recent Greek history, it had for several years become a peripheral concern that most Greeks assumed was confined to certain downtown neighborhoods in Athens and Thessaloniki and occasional foreign targets. This decade has felt nothing like the heyday of domestic terrorism from the 1970s to 1990s, when ELA alone conducted an estimated 500 bomb attacks. The latest surge in terrorist activity has many Greeks questioning the sense of security that they have taken for granted for years. We have already seen reports suggesting right-wing groups may be emerging to counter leftist extremists, for example the new ASPIS (Police Patriotic Power), a group whose founding statement declared "we won't tolerate violence and crimes" and "we are not afraid of them and they better be afraid of us!" Meanwhile, the growing public fears are matched by genuine concern on the part of Greek law enforcement officials that the terrorist groups they have been unable to crack may be capable of a major deadly attack.

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